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A Peace-Offering
IN AN
APOLOGY and humble PLEA
FOR
INDVLGENCE
AND
LIBERTIE OF CONSCIENCE.

By sundry PROTESTANTS differing in some things
from the PRESENT ESTABLISHMENT
about the Worship of GOD.

*Ambigua de Religione Capita quæ plurimum habere videntur
obscuritatis, tantis tamdiu animis decertata, apud Sapientes
hoc fere Certum reliquerunt, nusquam minus inueniri veri-
tatem, quam ubi Cogitur Assensus. Hugo Grotius.*

Exiguam sedem sacris litusq; rogamus
Innocuum, & cunctis undamq; auramq; patentem.

By John Owen, D.D.



LONDON, Printed in the Year 1687.

A Peace-Offering

TO THE
APOLOGY and humble PRAYER
FOR

INDULGENCE

TO THE CONSCIENCE

By JAMES B. OSTERLY, Minister of the Gospel in London.
From the PRESS OF R. & J. D. BISHOP, 1800.

Rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and offering praise and thanksgiving
for the redemption of our souls by the blood of Christ, and
for the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of His precious blood.

Engaged to the service of God and His Church,
Innocent & conscientious, and of good report.



LONDON: Printed in the Year 1800.



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He infinitely Wise and Holy GOD, who disposeth of all things according to the counsel of his own Will, having designed our portion in the World, unto the *latter days* thereof; wherein, besides those difficulties which in all Ages attend them who are called unto the search and profession of the *Truths of the Gospel*, we are forewarned of *sundry Evils* peculiar unto them, rendering them *perilous*: as it is our duty to apply ourselves to serve his good pleasure in our Generation, without repining at that station which in his work he hath allotted unto us; so also diligently to take care, that we adde not unto the *Evils of the days wherein we live*; and that, what we may be called to suffer in them according to his Will, may not be lost unto his holy Ends and Purposes in the World, but some way or other rebound unto his Glory. What shall befall us in the course of our Pilgrimage, how we shall be disposed of, as to our outward temporary concerns, as it is not in *our power to order and determine*, so neither ought to be in our care, so as that we should be anxiously solicitous thereabouts: All things of that nature belong unto his *sovereign Pleasure*, who will make them work together for good to them that love him. Resting in his Will as to our outward state and condition in this World, with that of the *Times and Seasons* wherein our Lot is fallen, which he hath put in his own power, we shall endeavour in reference thereunto, to *possess our Souls in patience*, waiting for that day

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which

which shall manifest every mans work of what sort it is. And we know that it is but yet a little while, before it will be ne grief of heart unto us, for to have done or suffered any thing for the Name of the Lord Jesus, according to his mind and will. For whereas we are well assured, that the old Enemy of Mankind who is sometimes awake and sowing of Tares whilst Men sleep, is never so far asleep, whilst any are endeavouring to sow the good seed of the Gospel, as not to stir up an opposition to their work, and to labour the ruine of their persons; so we believe that every sincere endeavour to promote the holy Truths and Ways of God, according to that measure of Light which he is pleased graciously to impart unto any of the Sons of Men, is accepted and owned by him, who is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him; which is sufficient to secure their peace and consolation, under all the evils that on the account of their work they may conflict withal. Neither is it a small alleviation of any trouble that we may be exposed unto, that no pretence, colour, reason, or arguings for our sufferings, no means, ways, or kinds of them, no ends unto them, can possibly be invented, proposed, pursued, but what we are fully forewarned of; that so we might not at any time think our selves surprized, as though some strange thing had happened unto us. This then is our great concernment in the profession of Religion, this that which we ought principally to attend unto, namely, To commend our Consciences unto God, that in all sincerity and godly simplicity, we exercise our selves in the Work that he calls us unto, not corrupting his Word, or staining our profession by a conversation unbecoming the holiness of the Gospel; and for what may outwardly befall us, though producing Heaviness and Sorrow for a season, the last day will manifest to have been unspeakably more the concernment of other Men, than our own. It is therefore on this account, and that duty which we owe unto all the Sons of Men, especially those who in any place or degree have the rule and disposal of us in this world, and the things thereof, committed unto them, that notwithstanding the hazard that attends us in the discharge of every duty of this kind, we adventure to represent our Condition and Desires unto all that endeavour to follow after Truth with Peace. For as the Minds of

Men are capable of no greater Perfection than what consists in receiving the whole Truth of the Gospel, nor their Souls of greater blessedness, than attends obedience thereunto, so every mistake of it, every prejudice against it, every opposition unto it, or any part of it, are not onely in themselves a corruption and debasement of the mind, but are usually attended with consequents of greater Evils, in and unto them by whom they are entertained. And this condition oftentimes are men otherwise upright and wile, cast into; either by their own ingrafted prejudices, or neglect of that severe disquisition after Truth, which all the Sons of it are obliged unto; or by suffering themselves to be imposed on, by the suggestions of others, who perhaps sacrifice their actions in and about the things of God; to some secular (and it may be very corrupt) ends of their own. Hence *Truth* and *Innocency*, which cannot be oppressed but when clothed with misrepresentations and calumnies, have in all Ages been forced to suffer the sad effects of *their mistakes*, who in the meantime professed highly an avowment of them. So in particular, the foundation of all the miseries that ever beset the Professors of the Truth of Christ, since the day that the *Name of Christ* was known in the VVorld, and consequently of all that evil and confusion in the Earth, which the Lusts of Men have produced, and the righteous Judgement of God inflicted, have lain in general, either in the ignorance of Men, of the genuine nature and tendency of the Truth it self, or in their credulity, in giving credit unto those *misrepresentations* of it, which it hath always been the interest of many in the world, to frame and promote. Hence the Professors of *Christianity*, and every particular way therein, in their respective seasons and generations, have esteemed it their duty, not onely unto Themselves, to waive their imminent sufferings, if it were the will of God thereby, but unto Others also, whom they judged to be engaged against God and his Truth, in their persecution of them, to declare freely and fully what it was that they did believe and practise; and therein plead the equity and reasonableness of that deliverance which they aimed at; of *Themselves* from suffering, and of *Others* from sinning, And herein had they before their eyes, the Example of the *Great*

Apostle of the Gentiles, who with various success did oftentimes make use of the like defensatives of himself, and his Doctrine. Nor is it the least prescription of the *Law of Nature* implanted in the heart of man by him that made it, that *Innocency* should so far undertake its own protection and security, as to endeavour a removal of prejudicate imputations out of the minds of them, in whose Judgement it is concerned. And this *Law*, all Men universally yeild obedience unto, who intend not to abuse such imputations unto sinister ends, nor suitable unto the innocency they profess, and so by deserting their own *unblameable defence*, contract a guilt rendring them incapable of it for the future. Whereas therefore it hath pleased him in *whose hand our life and breath, and all our ways are*, to place us in that condition, wherein by the apprehensions he hath given us of his Mind and Will, in some things relating unto his Worship, we are forced to differ from others, we conceive it our Duty, for the prevention of farther Evils, openly and candidly to declare both what we profess, and what in all humility we desire thereupon: And we cannot but hope, that when the matters of our difference are known and considered, that they will not be judged of so high a demerit, as to render a modest peaceable desire of *Indulgence* in our adherence unto them, a new addition of guilt. For their case is miserable indeed, who being prejudged into a condition of sufferings, though not convicted of evil, may not desire relief from those, who alone are able to afford it; that also being made an aggravation of their misery, by being made an aggravation of their supposed guilt.

And in particular, this course is made at this season necessary unto us, from the exasperation of the minds of many, in reference unto what we profess and desire, with the prejudices that are taken up and improved unto our disadvantage and trouble: For although we have with the joynt Consent of all our Churches, some years since, publicly declared what is the Faith which we profess, and the Way of the Worship of God wherein we walk, and did hope that it would not be looked on as an unreasonable expectation, that our *Confession* might have received a christian charitable sedate consideration, before

it were condemned, or those that adhere unto it judged as evil-doers for their so doing; yet considering the sad exasperations of the Minds of Men; though upon occasions wholly foreign to the matter of our Fair-hand Profession, we cannot be without some apprehensions that far the greatest part of those who are loudest in their cries for *severity* against us, have scarce been so faithful to Christian Candor and Ingenuity, as seriously to examine whether there be in what we believe and practise, a just foundation for that kind of proceeding and acting towards us, which they so earnestly desire to engage our Rulers into. If for no other reason then, but to endeavour to call off the thoughts of Men from *Persons*; and Personal Provocations, unto those things which are the pretended foundation of their actions, and with reference whereunto, their Account must be made at the last Day, when other mens real or apprehended Miscarriages will give no countenance to theirs, we cannot but judge it a Duty incumbent on us, to remind them what the things are which must give construction unto all that in this matter they shall undertake or perform; and whereinto, under all imputations whatever of things of other natures, our *comfort*, be it what it will, true or false, in all our sufferings that we may be called unto, is resolved. And we do know, that they will one day find themselves under a *most* mistake, who suppose that their severity against us, will be any farther justified, than there is ground for it in the *Principles* which we profess in the things of God; and this cannot but be evident unto them (if they will give themselves but the liberty of unprejudiced consideration) who know that a *relinquishment* of those *Principles* would instantly cause all those other *Pleas and Pretences*, to vanish out of their minds; which at present they only make use of. And therefore also shall we not much concern our selves in any other charge that is laid against us; but onely as to what we profess, and practise in the Ways and Worship of God, as knowing that from thence alone, all occasion is taken for them. We shall therefore onely briefly declare our sense of them, and then proceed to that which is our real concernment. For there is not any *new thing* herein under the Sun;

In all Ages, where-ever any way in Religion, hath been judged

judged by the most, rightly, or otherwise, to be contrary to the mind of God, as by them apprehended, it hath been immediately charged with the guilt of all the Evils that fell out in the days of i^{or} Profession, though evidently they had other Causes and Occasions. Such was the condition of *Christianity* in general of old; as is manifest from the *Apological Writings* of *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Arnobius*, *Cyprian*, *Lactantius*, *Minutius*, *Felix*, *Augustine*, and others. Upon every occasion of trouble, the common cry was, *Christianos ad Leones*. Such was also the Condition of the Professors of the Protestant Religion, upon the first Reformation, throughout the World; under which prejudice and imputation, they are yet forced to suffer the wrath of Men in many places. Whatever disadvantages then on this account we may be exposed unto, we have no reason to complain or think strange of, it being no other than all Men in the like condition in all Ages have had to conflict withal; and will have so, whilst Sin and Darkness continue in the World. To commend our Consciences unto God in well-doing, is the one'y means of peace in our selves, and the whole *Defensations* in reference unto others; which in this case is left unto us. Moreover if any who, either really make profession of *any way* in Religion, or are generally esteemed so to do, fall into personal Crimes and Miscarriages, which *no way* can secure it self against, Men justly provoked thereby, have scarce the patience to attend unto any plea for the *way* it self, or those who peaceably and innocently walk therein, though the charge against it be altogether groundless and unreasonable. Thus the abominations of the *Gnosticks* of old was charged upon the whole Body of Christianity; and the unwarrantable Zeal of one Man in firing a Temple in the *Kingdom of Persia*, reflected an imputation of *Sedition* on all the Professors of the Gospel, to their extirpation out of that Empire. But the unrighteousness of this charge, is we hope evident even to themselves who would fain make use of it unto our disadvantage; for *no Society in the world* can give security for the deportment of *all Individuals* belonging unto it, according unto the Rules of the whole, and if they may be charged with such miscarriages, it were ealie to demonstrate

monstrate, that no *Community*, no Profession of Men in the World, no *Order*, no *Way*, can be acquitted from guilt, or thought meet to have Moderation exercised towards it. Besides, We know not in particular, but that all occasions of reflecting upon *Our Societies* on this account, have by the goodness of God been prevented, for which we are humbly thankful unto His Holy Majesty. But if to accuse, be enough to render any Men nocent, none can be long innocent. *Disbauch Banquets, promiscuous Lusts, and Incests*, must on that ground be thought to be the Ends of the *Primitive Assemblies of Christians*. If Men will take to themselves the liberty of entertaining evil and groundless surmizes, it is impossible for us, or any living, to set bounds to their imaginations. So that we have nothing in this case to do, but to leave the Authors of such false and calumnious insinuations, unto that Reward which God and their own Consciences will not suffer them to lose; and our Vindication unto the *Providence of God*, over our *present and future deportment*. It may be thought of nearer concernment unto us, when the *late Troubles in these Nations*, are objected, and the remembrance of them renewed unto our prejudice. But whether the frequent and importunate urging of them, since by his *Majesties Clemency and Grace* they are put into *Legal Oblivion* forever, do tend unto the compose and settlement of the Minds of Men, which is certainly the duty of all good Subjects to aim at, we leave it unto the consideration of those who are wiser then we, and on whom the care of the *Peace and Wellfare of the Kingdom* is in an *special manner incumbent*. For our own parts, we shall only say, That whereas they were neither begun, nor carried on, upon the account of that *Way* in the *Worship of God* which we profess; May the remembrance of them be never so severely revived, we cannot fear any just conclusion from thence, unto a suspicion of *Troubles of the like nature for the future*; as well knowing the *absolute freedom of our Principles from any such tendency*, as well as the *providential unravelling of all these interdicted Interests and Occasions, which individual Persons countenanced themselves withall, in their Engagements*

Magistracy we own, as the Ordinance of God; and His Majesty as the Person set over us by his Providence, in the Chief and Royal Administration thereof: In submission unto Him, we profess our Duty to regulate our Obedience by the Laws and Customs over which He presides in the Government of these Nations. So that OUR PRACTICAL ADHERENCE UNTO OUR OWN AVOWED PRINCIPLES, is all that in this matter can fall under the most suspicious and uncharitable surmise. That there is any means of giving such absolute satisfaction on concerning future events, which depend on the minds and wills of Men, as to leave all suspicion concerning them impossible, we know not; much less to prevent some Mens pretending suspicions for ends best known unto Themselves: But this we know, that what ways or means soever are warranted, or established by the Laws of this Land, or may be so, and they are such as Mankind must content themselves withal, as incapable of further or greater assurance; or whatever else may be rationally and justly expected from us, we have given, and are ready to give security by, against the Evils intimated in this Charge upon us; which being the utmost that our Duty calls upon us for, we hope we shall not always suffer for being the Unhappy Objects of some Mens GROUNDLESS JEALOUSIES, which for us to remove, is altogether impossible, God himself having not appointed any way or means for us to use to that end or purpose.

As then neither We, nor Others, can hinder Men from making use of this Pretence, for some ends of their own, (though we know, as it is used by Them, it contributes nothing to Publick Tranquility, and the compsure of the Minds of Men) so we hope that GOD will so far in His good Time clear up the Innocency and Sincerity of our Intentions, and their suitability unto our declared Principles, that no just occasion of Reproach be administered unto Them who wait for Advantages against Us.

And what are We, that Publick Disturbance should be feared from Us? Nec pondera rerum, nec momenta sumus: By what way or means, were we never so desirous, could we contribute any thing thereunto? What Designs are we capable of?

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What *Intrist* have we to pursue. What *Assistance* to expect or look after? What *Title* to pretend? What hopes of *Success*? What *Reward* of any hazard to be undergone? We have no Form of Government, *Civil* or *Ecclesiastical*, to impose on the Nation; Lay no *Pretext* unto *Power* to be exercised on the *Persons* of any of his *Majesties* *Subjects*; Have no *Expectations* from *Persons* or *Nations*, that might induce us to further or promote any similar aims of *other Men*: the utmost of our aim is but to pass the residue of our Pilgrimage in peace, serving God in the way of our Devotions: We covet not *Mens* Silver or their Gold, their Places or Preferments; Our whole Desire is that of *Israel* of old to their Brother *Edom*; *Let us pass, we pray, through the Country, we will not pass through the Fields, or through the Vineyards, neither will we drink of the Water of the Wells: we will go by the Kings High way, we will not turn to the right hand, nor to the left, until we have passed thy Borders.* May we thus far prevail, until the protection of Gods Providence, his Majesties Favour, and our own Innocency, we *Have* no Principles, we *Shall* have no Reason, farther to trouble our selves or others. If it be denied unto us, and we must yet be scattered over the face of the Earth, we shall yet pray for the prosperity of his *Majesty*, and the *Land* of our *Nativity*, patiently bearing the indignation of the Lord, against whom we have sinned, and waiting for His *Salvation*.

That which of late is principally urged unto our prejudice, is, *The prohibition of that Way of Worship which we desire to walk in, and the Establishment of another by LAW, to whose Authority we owe subjection.* When this begins once to be pleaded, the real merits of the Cause in debate, is usually over-looked, and the obedience required by *Law*, is only insisted on; as though that were grown a *Civil Difference* by the interpretation of a Law, which before was purely Religious. This *Paul* himself found to be one of the most difficult cases he had to contend withall; It was objected unto him, That he taught *Customs* which it was not *Lawful* for to do among the *Romans*, *Act 16. 17.* All that *Dominion* which he had to declare, was antecedently in general forbidden by Law; it being determined by the *Romans*

That no *Worship* of God should be admitted amongst them, *not* established by Publick Authority. And had not the Light and Truth of Christianity broken through that opposition, it must have lain shut up in darkness to this day. For our parts, we have onely this to say, That there is no reason to urge this as a peculiar Objection against us, it being the onely Foundation of all others; and onely occasion of the Difference about which we treat. Had not a Law enjoyned the practise of some things in the VVorship of God, which according unto our present Light we cannot assent unto, without ceasing to worship Him, (for to worship Him, in our own thoughts, against His Mind and VVill, is to profane His Name and VVorship), had it not forbidden the exercise and discharge of some Duties which we account our selves obliged unto by the Authority of God Himself, we had had no need to implore the Clemency of our Governours to relieve us against that Severity which we fear. This then we acknowledge, but withal, to state this Difference upon its right Foundation, do solemnly in all sincerity profess before God, His holy Angels, and all the VVorld, That it is not out of any Unwarrantable Obstinacy that we are conscious of unto our selves, Nor from any disaffection unto, or dissatisfaction in the Government that God hath set over us; but meerly from a sense of that Account which we have one day to make before JESUS CHRIST the JUDGE of All, that we cannot yeild that Compliance unto the Act for Uniformity which it requireth of us. The ~~Objection~~ then, notwithstanding this prejudice, is still the same; Conscience towards God in the things of his own VVorship, is still, and alone concerned; whatever other pretences and reasonings may in this Case be made use of, (as many are, and ever were in the like Cases, and will so be.) The whole real cause of that Severity which we humbly deprecate, and onely Reason lying against the Indulgence we desire, is our Profession and Practice in the things that are not of this World, but purely relating to the Revelation of the Mind and Worship of GOD. VVhatsoever therefore Men may plead, pretend, or urge, of another nature, we are so far conscious unto our own Integrity, as to be fully satisfied in our Minds, That whatever Dangers we may be

in this matter exposed unto, or whaever we may be called to suffer, it is all merely for *believing in God*, and worshipping of Him, according to what He hath been pleased to reveal of His Mind unto us. And as in this case, it is not in the power of any of the Sorts of Men to deprive us of that *Constancy* which our apprehension of the Truth will afford unto them that sincerely and conscientiously embrace it. To whether any man can commend their Consciences to God according to the Rules of the blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in our molestation and trouble, we leave it unto all Unprejudiced Men to judge. And that we may yet further remove all grounds of mistake, and obviate all other preences against us, we shall candidly declare the general Principles both of our Faith and Worship, and then leave our Conscience whatever it may be to the Judgement of him who hath promised a day wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, of his Majesty whom he hath set over us in Supreme Power, and of all other Persons whatever, who have any sense of the Terror of the Lord, the account we must make of serving Him according to what He is pleased to reveal of himself unto us, the nature of things known only by divine Revelation, or of the *infirm frail condition of Mankind* in this World.

For the Faith which we profess, and which we desire to walk according unto, we need not insist upon the particular heads of it, having some years since in our Confessions publicly declared it, with the joint consent of all our Churches; neither do we own or avow any *Doctrine*, but what is therein asserted and declared. And we hope it will not be looked upon as an unreasonable Request, if we humbly desire, That it may receive a christian charitable sedate consideration, before it be condemned. May we be convinced of any thing therein, nor agreeable unto the Scriptures, not taught and revealed in them, we shall be with the first in its rejection. That this hath been by any as yet attempted, we know not; and yet are we judged, censured and reproached upon the account of it. So far are Men degenerated from that frame of Spirit, which was in the Christians of old, so far have they relinquished the way wherein they walked towards those who differed from them.

Nor do we decline the Judgement of the *Primitive Church*; being fully satisfied, That what we teach and adhere unto, is as consonant unto the Doctrine thereof as that of any Church at this day in the World. The *four first General Councils*, as to what was determined in them in matters of Faith, are confirmed by *Law* in this Nation; which is all that from *Antiquity* hath any peculiar stamp of *Authority* put upon it amongst us; This also we willingly admit of, and fully assert in our *Confession*. Neither doth the addition of ours, disturb the *Harmony* that is in the *Confessions* of the Reformed Churches, being in all material points the same with them, and no otherwise differing from any of them in things of less importance, than as they do one from another; and as all *Confessions* have done, since the first Introduction of their use into the Churches of God. That which amongst them is of most special regard and consideration unto us, is that of the *Church of England*, declared in the *Articles of Religion*: And herein in particular; what is purely *Doctrinal*, we fully embrace, and constantly adhere unto. And though we shall not compare our selves with others, in Ability to assert, teach and maintain it; yet we cannot, whilst we are conscious unto our selves of our Integrity in our cordial adherence unto it, but bear with regret the *Clamorous Accusations* of some against us, for departing from the *Church of England*, who have not given that testimony of their adherence unto *its Doctrine*, which we have done, and by the help of God shall continue to do. It is true indeed, there are some *Enlargements* in our *Confession* of the things delivered in the Thirty Nine *Articles*; some Additions of things not expressly contained in them, which we were necessitated unto, for the full declaration of our Minds, and to obviate that *obliquity* which otherwise we might have been exposed unto, as reserving our Judgement in matters that had received great publick debate since the composition of those *Articles*: But yet we are fully persuaded, that there is not any proposition in our whole *Confession*, which is repugnant unto anything contained in the *Articles*, or is not by just consequence deducible from them. Neither were we the *Authors* of the *Explanations* or *Enlargements* mentioned; there being nothing contained in them, but what we have learned and

and been instructed in from the Writings of the most famous Divines of this Nation, Bishops and Others, ever since the Reformation; which being published by *Legal Authority*, have been always esteemed, both at home and abroad, faithfully to represent the Doctrine of the *Church of England*. We have *no new Faith to Declare, no new Doctrine to Teach, no private Opinions to Divulge*; no Point or Truth do we Profess, *no not one*, which hath not been declared, taught, divulged and esteemed as the common Doctrine of the *Church of England* ever since the Reformation.

If then we evince not *the Faith we profess* to be consonant unto the *Scriptures, the Doctrine of the Primitive Church, of the four first General Councils, the Confessions of the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, and that in particular of the Church of England*, we shall acknowledge the Condition of Things in reference unto that Liberty which we humbly desire, to be otherwise stated, than hitherto we have apprehended. But if this be the condition of our *Profession*, as we hope it is manifest unto all Unprejudiced and Ingenious Persons to be, who esteem it their Duty not to judge a matter of so great importance before they hear it, We can hardly think that They give up Themselves to the Conduct of the Meek and Holy Spirit of CHRIST, who are ready to breathe out Extirpation against us, as to our Interest in *this World*, for the profession of *Those Principles* in the things of God, which They pretend to build their own Interests upon for another.

The NON-CONFORMITY then that we may be charged with, being very remote from a dissent unto that Doctrine which is here publicly avowed, and confirmed by Law, it cannot but seem strange unto us, that any should endeavour to cast us under the same severity with them who utterly renounce it: and would entayl upon their Posterity, on the forfeiture of all their Publique Rights, as *English Men*, and benefit of their private Estates, not onely an adherence unto the *Protestant Religion*, but a Precise and Determinate Judgement and Practice in things of very *Little Concernment* therein; and of *none* at all, as to publique Tranquillity.

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Would it not seem strange, that a man might at as easie and cheap a rate, renounce the *Protestant Professors* and the *Fundamental Doctrines* of the Church of England, in things indispensablely necessary to Salvation, as to be mistaken, or to spend his assent about things dark and disputable in their own nature, and of very small importance, which way soever they are determined? So that Men in the embracing or refusal of them, rebel not against that commanding Light of God set up in their hearts to rule them in His Name, in that apprehension which they have of the Revelation of his Will, which is unto them of great and eternal moment.

They are then onely things relating unto *Outward Order* and *Worship*, wherein our dissent from the present *Establishment* of Religion, doth consist; things about which there hath been variety of Judgement, and difference in Practice, from the days of the Apostles, and probably will be so, until the end of the World. For we find by experience, that the late *Expedient* for the ending of differences about them, by vindicating of them into the arbitrary disposal of every Church, or those that preside therein, in whose *Determinations* all persons are to acquiesce, is so far from accomplishing the work whereunto it is designed, that it contributes largely to their increase and perpetuation. Our onely guilt then is, Our *Not agreeing with others* in those things wherein there never yet was an agreement among Christians: Nor, perhaps, had they all that frame of Spirit in Moderation and mutual Forbearance which the Gospel requires in them, would it ever be any way needful that there should so be.

For our parts, about these things we judge not other men, nor do, or ever did seek to impose our apprehensions on their Judgements or Practice. What in them is agreeable unto Truth, God knows, and will one day declare. Unto our present Lights in the Revelation of His Will, must our practice be conformed; unless to please Men, and secure our transitory, perishing Concernments, we intend to break his Bonds, and cast away his Cords from us.

And that it may the better appear what is both our Judgement and Practice, in and about these things, unto what we have declared

declared in the close of our *Confession*, (which we suppose they cannot reasonably and with satisfaction to their own Consciences, wholly overlook, who because thereof, are ready to reflect with severe thoughts upon us) we shall now only adde, the *General Principles* whereunto all that we profess or practise in these things, is resolved. And of them we humbly desire that a Christian and Candid Consideration may be had: As supposing that to pass a *Sentence of Condemnation* against us for our dissent unto any thing, without a previous weighing of the Reasons of that dissent, is scarce suitable unto that Law whereby we are Men, and engaged into Civil Societies. As the Religion is publicly received and established in this Nation, there are many *outward Concernments* of it, relating unto *Persons and Things*, that are disposed and regulated by and according to the Laws thereof: Such is that which is called, *Power Ecclesiastical*, or Authority to dispose of those *Affairs of the Church* with *coercive Jurisdiction*, which relates to the *outward publick Concernments* of it, and the Legal Interests of Men in them. This we acknowledge and own to be vested in the Supreme Magistrate, the *Kings Majesty*, who is the Fountain and Spring of all *Jurisdiction* in his own Kingdoms whatever. No power can be put forth or exercised towards any of his Subjects, which in the manner or nature of its exertion, hath the force of a Law, Sentence, or Jurisdiction; or which, as to the effect of it, reacheth their Bodies, Estates, or Liberties, but what is derived from him, and binding *formally* on that sole Reason, and no otherwise.

Hence we have no Principle in the least seducing us to transgress against any of those Laws which in former days were looked on as *safe Preservatives* of the *Protestant Religion and Interest in this Nation*. Did we assert a *Foreign Power* over his Majesties Subjects, and claim an obedience from them in some such cases as might at our pleasure be extended to the whole that is due unto Him; Did we, or any of us, by virtue of any *Office* we hold in the *Church of God*, claim and exercise a *Jurisdiction* over the Persons of his Majesties Subjects in Form and Course of Law; Or did we so much as pretend unto the exercise of any *Spiritual Power* that should produce effects on the *Outward*

ward Man; We might well fear, lest just offence shou'd be taken against us. But whereas the way wherein we worship God is utterly unconcerned in these things, and we willingly profess the Spring of all *Outward Coercive Jurisdiction*, to be in the *Person of the Kings Majesty alone*, without the least intermixture of any other Power of the same kind, directly or by consequence; we cannot but say with confidence, That it will be utterly impossible to convince us, That on this account we are Offenders.

For the Worship of God, and Order therein, (which is *purely Spiritual and Evangelical*) we acknowledge indeed the *Lord Jesus Christ* to be the onely *Institutor* or *Author* of it, and the holy Scripture the onely *Principle* revealing, the onely *Rule* to judge of it, and to square it by. It is not now our design to plead the Truth of this Principle, nor yet to clear it from mistakes, or vindicate it from opposition: All which are done elsewhere. Let it be supposed to be an *Error or Mistake*, which is the worst that can be supposed of It, we must needs say, That it is an *Error* which hath so much seeming countenance given unto it by enumerable places of Scripture, and by so many Testimonies of the Ancient and Modern Doctors of the Church, and is every way so free from the production of any Consequent of evil importance, That if there be any *faulture of the Minds of Men*, in and about the things of God, which from a common sense of the *fragility of Humane Nature*, may rationally expect forbearance and pardon from them; who have the happiness to be from all miscarriage, of that kind (if any such there be) this may claim a share and interest among them.

Nor are we able as yet to discern, how any acceptable account can be given to the Lord Jesus, at the last day, of severity against This Principle, or those that, otherwise inoffensive, walk according to the Light of it.

Moreover, Whereas Principles True in Themselves, may in their application unto Practice be pressed to give countenance unto that which directly they lead not unto; We have the advantage yet further particularly to declare, That in the pursuit of it in the Worship of God we have no other Ordinances or Administrations, but what are owned by the Law and Church of England

England. Now whatever other occasion may be sought against us, (which we pray God not to lay to their charge who delight in such Practices) we know full well that we differ in nothing from the whole form of *Religion established in England*, but only in some few things in outward Worship, wherein we cannot consent without the Renunciation of this Principle, of whose *falsehood* we are not convinced. This being our *only Crime*, if it be a Crime, this the *only Mistake* that we are charged with, in the things of God; we yet hope that sober Men will not judge it of so high a demerit, as to be offended with our humble desire of Indulgence, and a share in that Princely Favour towards Persons of Tender Consciences, which His Majesty hath often declared his Inclinations for.

We confess that often times, when such *Dissents* are made a *Crime*, they are quickly esteemed the *greatest*, yea, almost *all* that is criminal: But whether such a Judgement owes not it self more to *Passion, Prejudice, and private Interest*, than to right Reason, is not hard to determine.

For our parts, as we said before, They are no great things which we desire for our selves; the utmost of our aim being to pass the Remainder of the few days of our Pilgrimage in the *Land of our Nativty*, serving the Lord according to what He hath been pleased to reveal of His Mind and Will unto Us. And we suppose that those who are forward in suggesting Counsels to the contrary, know not well how to *countervail the Kings damage*.

That this our Desire is neither *unreasonable nor unjust*; that it containeth nothing contrary to the Will of God, the Practice of the Church of old, or to the disadvantage of the publick tranquillity of *these Nations*: But that all outward Violence and Severity on the account of our *Dissent*, is destitute of any firm Foundation in *Scripture, Reason*, or the present *sancture of Affairs amongst us*, we humbly crave Liberty in the further pursuit of our own JUST DEFENCE, briefly to declare and evidence.

The great *Fundamental Law* amongst men, from which all others spring, and whereby they ought to be regulated, is that *Law of Nature*, by which they are disposed unto *Civil Society*,

for the good of the whole and every individual Member thereof. And this good being of the greatest importance unto all, doth unspeakably out-balance those *Inconveniencies* which may befall any of them through a Restriction put upon them by the particular Laws and Bonds of the *Society* wherein they are engaged. It is not impossible, but that sundry persons might honestly improve many things unto their advantage in the increase of their Interest in things of this World, were not bounds set unto their Endeavours, by the Laws of the Community whereof they are Members. But whereas no *Security* may be obtain'd that they shall not have their particular Limits and Concernments broken in upon by an Hand of Violence and Injustice, but in a pursuit of that *Principle of Nature*, which directs them to the only *Remedy of that Evil*, in *Civil Society*, they are all in general willing to foregoe their *particular advantages*, for that which gives them *Assurance and Peace* in all that they are and enjoy besides. All such conveniencies therefore, as consist in the things that are within the Power of Men, and are inferior to that Good and Advantage which *Publique Society* doth afford, the *Law of Nature directing Men*, and their *chiefest Good*, commands them, as Occasion requires, to forbear and quit. Nor can any *Community be established*, without obedience unto that *Command*. But of the things that are not within the power of Men, there is another reason. If the Law of Society did require that all Men engaging thereunto should be of one *stature and form of visage*, or should have the same measure of *Intellectual Abilities*, or the same Conception of all Objects of a Rational Understanding, it were utterly impossible that any *Community* should ever be raised among the Sons of Men.

As then all Inconveniencies, yea and Mischiefs relating unto things *within the power of Men*, are to be undergone and born with, that are less than the Evils which nothing but *Political Societies* can prevent, for the sake thereof: So the allowance of those Differences which are inseparable from the nature of Man, as diversified in Individuals, and insuperable unto any of their Endeavours, is supposed in the Principles of its being and constitution. Yea, this is one Principle of the Law of Nature, to
which

which we owe the Benefits of humane Conversation, and Administration of Justice, that those Differences amongst Men which unto them are absolutely unavoidable, and therefore in themselves not intrenching upon, nor disannulling the good of the whole, (for Nature doth not interfere with its self) should be forborn and allowed among them, seeing an endeavour for their extinguishment, must irresistibly extinguish the Community it self, as taking away the main supposal on which it is founded. And in that *Harmony* which by an answerableness of one thing unto another, riseth from such Differences, doth the chiefest Glory and Beauty of Civil Society consist; the several particulars of it also, being rendred useful unto the whole thereby. Of this nature are the things concerning which we discourse. They relate, as is confessed, unto *Things spiritual and supernatural*: That the will of God in *these things* cannot be known but by Revelation from Himself, all Men will acknowledge: And we suppose they will with no less readiness consent, That *Divine Revelation cannot be apprehended or assented unto, but according to the nature and measure of that Light, which God is pleased to communicate unto them unto whom such Revelation is made*: That *this Light* doth so equally affect the *Minds of all Men*, or that it is possible it should do so, considering the divers ways and means of its communication, with the different dispositions of them that receive it, that they should all have the same apprehensions of the things proposed unto them, none will judge, but such as take up their profession in *these things* on Custom, Prejudice, or Interest. It will then hence evidently follow, That Mens apprehensions of things *spiritual and supernatural*, such we mean as have no alliance unto the ingrafted Light of Nature, are not absolutely under their own power, nor depend on the Liberty of their wills, whereunto all Law is given. And therefore is the diversity in and about them, to be reckoned among *these unavoidable Differences* which are supposed in the *Law of Civil Society*, and without which Supposal, every attempt for any such Society, would be destructive of it self. Among *these apprehensions*, and the exercise of our Consciences towards God upon them, lies all the difference from the Present Establishment, which we desire an *Indulgence* to be shewed towards; not at all questioning but

that it is lawful for them who have attained unto an agreement in them, so far as they have attained, to confirm and strengthen that agreement among themselves, and tender it desirable unto others, by all such Ways and Means as by Right, and the Laws of the Society whereof they are, they may make use of.

And it is, as we humbly conceive, in vain pretended, *That it is not the Apprehensions of Mens Minds, and their Consciences unto God upon them, but only their outward Actions that fall under the Penalties desired by some to be indispensably imposed on Dissenters from the Established Form*; Seeing those Penalties are not only annexed unto Actions which such Apprehensions require, as *Duties unto God*, but also unto a *not acting* contrary unto them, which directly and immediately reflect on the Mind and Conscience it self: other ways to reach the *Consciences of their Brethren*, it is utterly impossible to find out. And to teach men that their Consciences towards God are not concerned either in *not acting* according to their Light in his Worship, or in *acting against* it, is to teach them to be Atheists.

WE cannot therefore but hope that our distance from the present Establishment, in some few things relating unto *Supernatural Revelation*, (especially whilst in our agreement with it, there is a salve for all things in the least intrenching on the Light of Nature, and all things whatever, that even of Revelation it self, are necessary to the grand end of it, with Security against any thing that may any way incommode Publick Tranquility) being unto us insuperable, and therefore provided for by the Fundamental Law of all Civil Societies, that it will not always receive so severe a construction as to deprive us of the Good and Benefit thereof. For to annex Penalties, which in the progress will deprive men of all those advantages in their outward Concernments which Publique Society doth or can afford, unto those Differences, without a supposition whereof, and provision for, there could be no such Society at all, is to destroy that whose good and preservation which is intended.

And therefore the different Conceptions of the Minds of Men in the things under consideration, with actions consonant unto them, being not only an unavoidable Consequent of Nature

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tures constant production of the Race of Mankind, in that various diversity which in all instances we behold, but also rendered farther insuperable, from the nature of *the things themselves about which they are exercised*, (being of Divine Revelation) they were ever in the World esteemed without the Line of *Civil Coercion* and Punishment, untill it came to be the Interest of some to offer Violence to those Principles of Reason in Themselves, which any outward Alteration in the state of things is capable of rendering their own best Protection and Defence.

And on these Grounds it is, That FORCE never yet attained, or long kept that in RELIGION which is aimed at.

And the Great Roman Historian tells us, That it is *Indecorum Principi ad tractare quod non obtineat*; No way honourable unto a Sovereign Prince, to attempt that which will never be accomplished.

But because what may seem obscure in this Reason of *things*, and Principles of Community, (which usually affect Them only, who without Interest or Prejudice, give up Themselves to the Conduct of Rational and Sedate Consideration, with which sort of Persons *alone*, we have not to deal) is exemplified in the GOSPEL, whose furtherance is on all Hands pretended; We shall thence also briefly manifest, that the Way pretended for the promotion of its Interest, by *Severity in External Penalties*, on the account of such Differences as we are concerned in, is both opposite unto the Spirit of its Author, and contrary to the Rules of it, with the Practise of Those who have walked according to them.

As among the many blessed Ends of the *Conversation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Flesh*, it was not of the least moment, that he might set us a *Pattern*, and give us an example of that Frame of Heart, and Holiness of Life, whereby we may become like unto our HEAVENLY FATHER, and be acceptable before Him, so in his carrying on of that Design, there was not any thing that he more *emphatically*,

emphatically called upon his Disciples to endeavour a Conformity unto him in, than in his *Meekness*, *Lowliness*, *Gentleness*, and *Tenderness* towards all. These he took all occasions for our good to shew forth in Himself, and to commend unto Others. Whatever Provocation He met withall, whatever injurious Opposition He was exposed unto, He did not *contend*, nor *cry*, nor *cause His Voice to be heard* with Scife or Anger. The Sins of Men indeed, He reprov'd *with all Authority*, their groundless Traditions in the Worship of God, He rejected; their Errors He refuted by the Word: But to the *Persons* of Men, He was always *Meek and Tender*, as coming to *Save*, and not to *Destroy*; to *keep Alive*, and not to *Kill*. In the Things of *Man*, He referred all unto the Just Authority and Righteous Laws of Men; but in the Things of *GOD*, never gave the least intimation of *Severity*, but onely in His *Holy Threats* of future Evil in the World to come, upon Mens Final Impenitency and Unbelief. **COERCE, FINE, IMPRISON, BANISH,** *Those that apprehend not aright all and every thing that I would have them instructed in;* are Words that never proceeded out of His holy Mouth, Things that never entred into His gracious Heart. And we are perswaded, that it is a thing of marvelous difficulty, for any Man seriously to think, That He who was and is so full of compassion towards all the Sons of Men, even the Worst of them, should ever give the least consent unto the *punishment*, and gradual destruction, of Those who in sincerity desire to love and obey Him, and do yet unavoidably *mistake* in their apprehensions of some few things, pleaded to be according to His Mand, their Loye and Obedience unto Him thereby being no whit impeached: When some of his Disciples of old, in *zeal* as they pretended, unto Himself, and the Truths preached by Him, would have called for *fire from Heaven*, on those who had *contumeliously slighted* Him upon a supposed diversity in Religion, for which they thought themselves warranted (though falsely) by a *President out of the Old Testament*; He lets them know, that it was an unacquaintedness with their own *Spirits*, causing them to imagine that to be *Zeal for the Truth*, which was indeed but Self-Revence, and private Interest, which had caused them to speak so unadvisedly.

Now

Now that *the same mind might be in us that was in Jesus Christ*, that His Example is to be a Rule unto us, that we ought all to be *baptised into the same Spirit with Him*; that what from His Frame of Heart and Actions, as revealed in his Word, we can rationally conclude that He would approve or disallow, we ought to square our Proceedings and Judgments unto, none that own his Name, can deny.

And if Men would not *stife*, but suffer themselves to be guided by the Power of their Convictions, they would quickly perceive how inconsistent with it, are their thoughts of *Rigour and Severity* towards those which differ from them in some few things relating to the Mind of God in and about His Worship,

Certainly this Readiness of *Servants*, who are themselves *pardoned Talents*, to fall with violence on their Fellows (upon the account of his Service, though otherwise it may be poor and despicable in the World) for *lesser Debts*, and those only supposed, not proved real, will appear at the Last Day, not to have been so acceptable unto him, as some Men on grounds and pretences utterly foreign unto this whole business, are willing now to persuade themselves that it is. Would men in these things, which are principally *His*, and not their own Concernments, but as *His*, labour to be always cloathed with his Spirit, and do nothing but what they can rationally satisfy themselves that He Himself would do in like case; there would be an end not onely of this *Debate*, but of many other Mischiefs also, which the *Christian World* is at this day pestered withal, And it must needs seem strange that Men can persuade themselves that they do that for Christ which they cannot once think or imagine that He would do Himself. Certainly setting aside provocations and prejudices, any Man who hath but read the Gospel, and gives any Credit unto it, is a competent Judge, whether *External Force* in these Things, do more answer the Spirit of Christ, or that from which He suffered.

But we have not onely His Heart and Actions for our Example, but His Word also, as revealed by Himself and His Apostles, as our Rule in *this matter*.

With nothing more doth it abound, as to our Duty in this World, than with Precepts for, and Exhortation unto *mutual forbearance*.

forbearance of one another in our Mistakes and Failings. And although there be force and Light enough in its *General Rules*, to guide us in all particulars, yet lest any should imagine that the Cause under Consideration, about difference of *Apprehensions and Practices in some things relating to the Worship of God*, might be exempted from them, even that also is variously instanced in, and confirmed by Examples approved by himself. The great Apostle, who gives us that general Rule, That we should walk together in one mind, so far as we have attained, and for other things of difference, wait for the Revelation of the Mind of God unto them that differ, *Phi. 3. 15, 16.* every where apply his own Rule unto the great difference that was in those days, and long after, between the *Jewish and Gentile Believers*. The one continued under a supposal of an obligation to the observation of *Mosaical Rites and Ceremonies*, from which the other was instructed that they were set at liberty. This difference, as is the manner among the Sons of Men, wrought various Jealousies between them, with disputes and censurings of each other; whereof the Apostle gives us a full account, especially in his Epistle to the *Romans*, Chap. 14, 15. Neither did they rest here, but those of the Circumcision every where kept their Assemblies and Worship distinct from the Congregations of the Gentile-Believers: Hence in most places of note, there were two Churches, one of the Jews, and another of the Gentiles, walking at peace in the Faith of the Gospel, but differing as to some Ceremonial Observances. The whole Society of the Apostles, observing their difference, to prevent any evil consequent, in their Assembly at Jerusalem, assigned to the several Parties their particular Banns, how far they should accommodate themselves unto one another by a mutual condescension; that they might walk in Love and Peace, as to what remained of difference among them: The Jews are taught by them not to impose their Rites and Ceremonies on the Gentiles; and the Gentiles to abstain from some things for a season, whereunto their Liberty did extend, whereby the other were principally provoked.

Their Bonds being so fixed, and their general Duty stated, both parties were left at liberty, as to their practice in the things wherein

wherein they could not yet be reconciled: And in that different practise did they continue for many years, until the occasion of their division, was by the providence of God in the destruction of the Judaical Church, utterly taken away.

These were the Rules they proceeded by, this their course and practise, who unquestionably under the Lord Jesus were invested with supreme Authority over the whole Church, of that kind which is not transmitted unto any of the Sons of Men after the ceasing of their Office and Work, and were guided infallibly in all their determinations. *Coercions; Restraints; Corporal Punishments*, were far from their thoughts; yea, the very exercise of any *Ecclesiastical Power* against them who dissented from what they knew to be Truth, so that in general they were found in the Faith, and walked in their Lives as became the Gospel.

And whereas they sometimes carry the matter to a supposal of disobedience unto those important things which they taught and commanded in the Name of their Lord and Master, and thereupon proceeded to denounce Threatnings against the Disobedient, They expressly disclaim all thoughts of proceeding against them, or any Power or Warrant from Christ committed unto them, or any others, or that afterward in his Providence should so be, so to do) with external carnal force and penalties; avowing their Authority over All, that was ever to be purforth in things of that nature, to be spiritual, and in a spiritual manner onely to be exercised, 2 *Cor.* 10. 4. 5.

And because the Church might not seem to be disadvantaged by this disclaimour of Power *externally to coerce* such as received not the Truth that it embraced, and to be cast into a worse condition than that of the *Jews* which went before, whose Ordinances being Carnal, were established and vindicated by Carnal Power, St. *Paul* lets them know, That this alteration is for the better; and the Coercion of Mischances under the Gospel, by Threatnings of the future Judgement which would have a special respect unto them, more weighty than the severest Penalties that were appointed by *Moses Law*, *Hib.* 10. 28. 29, 30.

Not that *lesser Differences* in apprehensions of the Mind of God in his Word, had any punishment assigned unto them under the *Old Testament*, whose Penalties concerned them onely who turned away to the worship of any other god but the God of *Israel*, (and such no man pleads for.) But that the whole nature of the Ordinances and Worship of the Church being changed from Carnal and Earthly, to Heavenly and Spiritual; so also are the Laws of Rewards and Punishments annexed unto them. These were the Rules, this the Practice in this Case, of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. These Rules, this Practice, hath he recorded in his Word for our instruction and Direction.

Might all those who profess Obedience unto his Name, be prevailed on to regulate their Judgements by them, and quire their Proceedings unto them, the Church of God would have peace, and the Work of God be effectually carried on in the World, as in the days of old. And for our parts, we will never open our mouths to deprecate any Severity that may be warranted from the Gospel, or Apostolical Direction and Practice; against any mistake of that importance in the things of God, as our Principles and ways may rationally be supposed to be. For although we are perswaded that what we profess and practice is according unto the mind of Christ; yet because it is our lot and portion to have our *Governours* and *Rulers* otherwise minded, we are contented to be dealt withal so, as the blessed Gospel will warrant any to deal with them who are so far in the wrong, as we are supposed to be. And if herein we cannot prevail, we shall labour to possess our Souls in patience, and to commit our Cause to him that judgeth righteously.

This we know, That the Judgement and Practice of the first Churches after the days of the Apostles, was conform to the Rules and Examples that by them were given unto them. Differences in *External Rites of Worship*, which were found amongst them, where the substance of Faith was preserved, they looked upon as no breach of Union at all. A long Catalogue of such Differences as were from time immemorial amongst them, is given us by *Socrates the Historian*. And he who first disturbed the peace of the Churches about them, by dividing their communion,

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(*Victor of Rome*) is left branded upon record, with the Censures of the principal Persons for *Learning and Holiness* throughout the World, in those days. Nor is our dissent from the *Present Establishment* of any larger extent, than such as the general consent of all the first Churches extended the Bond of their Communion unto.

Impositions of things indifferent, with subscriptions to precise determinations on points doubtful & ambiguous, with confinements of mens practices in all outward ceremonies and circumstances of Worship, were things not born in the World for some hundreds of years after the first planting of Churches. *Origen* in his third Book against *Celsus* pleads expressly, That there ever were Differences amongst Professors of Christianity from the beginning; and that it was impossible but that there should be; which yet he shews hinder'd not their Faith, Love, and Obedience. *Iustin Martyr* in his second *Apology*, declares his forbearance, and the Churches of those days, towards those who believing in *Christ* yet thought themselves obliged to the observation of *Mosaical Rites and Ceremonies*, provided that they did not impose the practice of them upon others. *Ignatius* before them, in his *Epistle* to the *Philadelphians*, professeth, That to persecute Men on the account of God or Religion, is to make our selves conformable to the Heathen that know not God. *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Arnobius*, and *Lactantius*, openly pleaded for a liberty in Religion, as founded in the Law of Nature, and the inconsistency of Faith with Compulsion, in that extent, which we aim not at. The Synod of *Alexandria* in the case of *Origen*, condemns all External Force in Religion; and reproached the *Arrians* as the first Inventors and Promoters of it.

It is indeed pleaded by some, That the Christians of those days had reason to assert this Liberty, because there was then no Christian Magistrate who might make use of the Civil Sword in their behalf, or for the punishment of Dissenters from them; and that this was the reason of their so doing.

But the Dishonesty of this pretence is notorious. They affirm directly, That no force, coercion, or restraint, is to be used in or about the Worship of God, nor outward power in a way of Penalties, to be exercised over the Consciences of Men herein.

To say they thus pleaded and pretended, meerly to serve their own present condition and occasion; but that upon the alteration of things they would be otherwise minded, is calumniously to reflect upon those Holy Witnesses of Christ, the guilt of the highest *Hypocrisie* imaginable. And Men cannot invent a more effectual means to cast contempt on all Religion, and to root a due sence of it out of the World, than by fomenting such imaginations. Let them therefore rest in peace, under that Reputation of Holiness and Sincerity which They justly deserve; whatever be the issue of things with us, or those which may suffer with us in the like condition.

But neither were they alone: The Great *CONSTANTINE* Himself, the first Christian Magistrate with supreme Power, by a Publique Edict declared, THAT THE LIBERTY OF WORSHIP WAS NOT TO BE DENIED UNTO ANY. And until the Latter End of his Reign, there were no thoughts of exercising Severity, with reference unto any Divisions amongst *CHRISTIANS* about the *WORSHIP* of GOD.

After the rise of the *Arrian Heresie*, when the interposition of Civil Censures upon the account of Difference about things spiritual, had made an entrance by the Solicitations of some zealous Persons for the Banishment of *Arrian*, and some of his Co-partners; It is not easie to relate what Miseries and Confusions were brought upon the Churches thereby. Imprisonments, Banishments, and Ruine of Churches, make up much of the *Ecclesiastical History* of those days.

After a while, *Arrian* is recalled from Banishment, and *Athanasius* driven into it. In a short tract of time, *Arrianism* it self got the Civil Sword in many places, wherewith it raged against all the Orthodox Professors of the Deity of the Son of God, as the *Synod of Alexandria* complains.

Much they suffered in the days of *Constantine*, unto whom the words of *Hilary* in this case, are worthy Consideration: Let (saith he) Your Clemency take care and order, that the
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Presidents of the Provinces look to Publique Civil Affairs, which alone are committed to them, but not meddle in things of Religion. And again, Let Your Gentleness suffer the People to hear them teaching whom they desire, whom they think well of, whom they choose. GOD TEACHETH, rather than BY FORCE EXACTETH the Knowledge of Himself; and ascertaining the Authority of his Commands by Works of Power; DESPISETH ALL COMPELLED Confession of Him. If Force bee used to compel Men unto the True Faith, the Bishops that profess it would interpose, and say, God is the God of the whole World, he needs no compelled obedience, nor requires any such Confession of him. He is not to be deceived, but to be well pleased. Whence is it then, that persons are taught how to worship God by Bonds and Perils? These are the words of Hillary,

But the same Persons suffered more during the Reign of Valens, who was dissuaded from Cruelty against the Christians by Themistius, a Pagan Philosopher, on the Principles of Common Reason and Honesty; plainly telling him, That by the way he used, he might force some to venerate his Imperial Robes, but never any one to worship God aright.

But the best Emperours in the mean time bewailed those fierce Animosities; whereby every Sect and Party laboured to oppress their Adversaries; according as they had obtained an Interest in Imperial Favour, and kept themselves from putting forth their Authority against any Dissenters in Christian Religion, who retained the Foundation of the Faith in any competent measure. Valentinianus by publique Decree, granted liberty of Religion unto all Christians, as Zosmen testifies, Lib. 6. Ammianus Marcellinus in his History observes the same. Gratian made a Law that Religion should be free to all sorts and sects of Christians, except the Manichæes, Euromians, and Pholinians; and that they should have their Meetings free, as both Socrates and Zosmen acquaint us.

Neither have they been without their Followers in those Ages wherein the Differences about Religion have risen to as great a height as they are capable of in this World.

Nor will Posterity be ever able to take off the lasting Blot from the Honour of Sigismund the Emperour, who suffered from

self to be imposed upon by the Council of *Constance* to break his word of Safety and Liberty, to *John Hus*, and *Jerome of Prague*.

And what did *Charles* the Fifth obtain, by filling the World with Blood and Uprokes, for the extirpation of *Protestantism*? Notwithstanding all his Victories and Successes, which for a while smiled upon Him, his whole Design ended in loss and disappointment.

Ferdinand and his Brother and Successor, made wise by his Example, kept constant the peace of the Empire, by a constant peace granted to the Consciences of Men.

His Son *Maximilian* continually professed, That the Empire of *Constance* belonged unto GOD alone, wherein He would never interpose. And upon the Return of *Henry* the Third of *France* out of *Poland*, He gave Him that Advice to this purpose, which it had been happy for that Prince, if He had understood and followed, before He came to die. But then even He also, having the severe Instruction given Him of His own Experience, left that as His last Advice to His Councilours, That they should no more with Force interpose in the matters of Religion.

Rodolphus, who succeeded *Maximilian*, by the same means for a long time preserv'd the peace of the Empire. And after he had by the persuasions of some, whose interest it was, so to persuade him, interdicted the *Protestants* in *Bohemia* the use of their Religion, upon the tydings of a defeat given to his Forces in *Hungary* by the *Turks*, He instantly replied, I looked for no other issue, since I invaded the Throne of God, imposing on the Conscience of Men; and therefore granted them their former Liberty.

Doth not all the World behold the contrary issue of the War in *France*, and those in the *United Provinces*, begun and carried on on the same account: The Great *Henry* of *France* winding up all the differences thereof, by granting Liberty to the *Hugonots*, laid a firm Foundation of the future Peace, and plenty Greatness of that Kingdom. Whereas the Cruelty of the Duke D'Alva, and his Successors, implacably pursuing the *Netherlands* to ruine on the same account, hath ended in the

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utter loss of sundry Provinces, as to the Rule and Authority that he and they endeavoured absolutely to inthrone, and rendred the rest of them scarce worth the keeping.

The World is full of Instances of the like kind.

On the other hand, When by the crafty Artifices and carnal Interests of some, the Principles of *External Coercion* for lesser Differences in the matters of Chrillian Religion, came to be inthroned, and obtained place in the Imperial Constitutions and Laws of other Kingdoms, the main use that was made of it, was to drive Truth, and the purity of the Gospel, out of the World, and to force all men to center in a Profession and Worship, framed to the Interest of some few men, who made no small advantage of it.

According as the Power and Purity of Religion decayed, so did this perswasion get ground in the Minds of Men, until it became almost all the Religion that was in the World, That those who submitted not unto the Dictates of them who by various ways obtained a mixture of Power, Civil and Ecclesiastical, into their hands, should be destroyed, and rooted out of the Earth.

This Apostacy from the Spirit, Principles, Rules, and Commands of the Gospel, this Open Contradiction to the Practise of the Apostles, their Successors, first Churches, best and wisest Emperours, attended with the woful consequents that have ensued thereon, in the ruine of Souls, proscriptions of the Truth, Martyrdom of thousands and ten thousands, commotions of Nations, and the destruction of many of them, We hope will not be revived in these days of Knowledge, and near approach of the Judge of all.

We trust that it will not be thought unequal, if we appeal from the example of the Professors of Christianity under its woful Degeneracy, unto the first Institution and publick instance of its Profession: especially being encouraged by the Judgement, Example, and Practise of many wise and Mighty Monarchs in these Latter Days.

The Case is the same as it was of old; no new *Pretences* are made use of, no *Arguments* pleaded, for the Introduction of Severity, but such as have been pretended at all times by those who were in possession of Power, when they had a mind to ruine any that dissented from them.

That the end of their *Conventicles* was for Sin and Uncleanliness; that the permission of them was against the Rules of Policy, and Laws of the Empire; that they were Seminaries of Sedition; that GOD was displeased with the confusion in Religions introduced by them; that Errors and mis-apprehensions of GOD were nourished in them; that they disturbed the Union, Peace, and Love, that ought to be maintained among Mankind; that they proceeded upon Principles of Pride, Singularity, Faction, and Disobedience unto Superiours; was from the first entrance of *Christianity* into the World, charged on the Professors of it.

The same Arguments and Considerations are constantly still made use of, and insisted on, by all men that intend Severity towards them that differ from them.

And they are such as will evidently serve alike any Party or Persuasion, that in any place at any time, shall be accompanied with Power: And so have been oftner managed in the hands of Error, Superstition, and Heresie, than of Truth and Sobriety.

Wherefore the *Bishop of Rome*, observing the unreasonable-ness of destroying Mankind upon such loose Principles and Pretences as are indifferently suited unto the Interest and Cause of all who have Power to make use of them, because they all suppose the thing in question, namely, *That they who enjoyed Power, did also enjoy the Truth*; found out a way to appropriate the whole advantage of them to himself, as having attained the ascription of an INFALLIBILITY unto him, in determining what is the Truth in all ~~things~~ ^{things} where Men do or may differ about Religion, or the Worship of God.

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This being once admitted and established, there seems great force in the foregoing pleas and reasonings: and no great danger in acting suitably unto them, but that the admission of it is more pernicious unto Religion, then all the consequents which it pretends to obviate. But where this infallible determination, is disclaimed, to proceed unto outward punishment for such conceptions of mens minds and consciences in the things of God, as he is pleased to impart unto them, which may be true and according to his will, upon reasons and pretences, invented originally for the service of error: and made use of for the most part unto that purpose being more fit for that work then for a contribution of any assistance unto truth, & is that which we know not how men can commend their Consciences unto God in. Besides what is it that is aimed at by this *external coercion* and punishment that all men may be of *one mind* in the matter of the worship of God, a thing that never was, nor ever will be by that means effected in this world, for neither is the means suited to the procurement of it, so far as it is possible. But when neither the reason of the thing it self will convince, nor the constant experience of so many ages, it is in vain for any to contend withall.

In the mean time we know, that the most of them who agree to: removed out of the way, by pretences that the *indulgence* and *liberty* desired, will certainly produce all sorts of evils both in Religion it self, and in the *civil state*, which being mentioned before in general, shall now be a little further considered, for this is principally, if not solely pleaded for the refusal and the rejection of them, neither doth this course of procedure seem to be *unwisely* fixed upon, by those who suppose it to be their interest to manage their opposition unto such an *indulgence*, wherein yet we hope they will at length discover their mistake,

For whereas the arguments to be in this case insisted on, consist
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merely in conjectures, jealousies, and suppositions of what may come to pass, none knows when, or where, it is easie for any to dilate upon them at their pleasure, nor is it possible for any to give satisfaction to all, that men may conjecture, or pretend to fear. Suppose all things that are evil, horrid, pernicious to truth and mankind, and when they are sufficiently aggravated, affirm that they will ensue upon this forbearance, which that all, or any of them will so do, no man can tell, and this design is satisfied. But it is sufficiently evident that they are all false or mistaken *suppositions*, that can give countenance unto these pretences.

For either it must be pretended, that *truth and order*, which those who make use of these reasonings, suppose themselves possess of: have lost the power and efficacy of preserving themselves, and of preventing the evils summoned up to be represented as the consequences of indulgence without externall force, and coercion, which they have had, Sometimes & elsewhere, or that they indeed have all actually followed and ensued upon such indulgence, in all times and places. The latter of these is so notoriously contradicted by the experience of the whole world, especially of sundry kingdoms and dominions in *Europe*, as *France, Germany, Poland*, and others, that it may not hope for admittance with the most obnoxious credulity. For the former, it is most certain that the truth of the Gospel, did never so prevail in the world, as when there was a full liberty as unto civil punishments granted unto persons to dissent in it, and about it.

And if that which is now so called, continueth not to have the same effect, it may justly be feared that it is not indeed what it is not called, or that it is not managed in a due manner. It is then altogether uncertain that upon the indulgences desired, such variety of opinions will ensue as is pretended, and unquestionably certain, that all such as produce practises, contrary to civil society, moral honesty, or the light of nature, ought in all instances of them to be restrained. For the Conscience of a man, can dictate no such thing unto him, there being an inconsistency in them with that supream light, which rules in Conscience, whilst it may be so called. And it is a hard thing to ruine multitudes at present sober and honest, least by not doing so, some one or other may prove brainfick, frantick, or vici

vicious, who also may be easily restrained when they appear so to be.

And moderate liberty will certainly appear to be Religions security in this matter, if the power of it, as well as the profession be regarded. For it is the interest of them who plead for *indulgence*, to watch and contend against error and heresie, no less than theirs by whom it is opposed. For professing all material truths with them they are not to be supposed to value or esteem them less than they. And it may be it will appear, that they have endeavoured as much their suppression in the way warranted by the Gospel, as those who profess such fears, of their increase.

They are *Protestants* only of whom we speak, and to suppose that they will not do their utmost for the opposing of the rise, growth, or progress of what ever is contrary, to that Religion which they profess, or that their interest therein is of less concernment unto them than that of others from whom they differ, is but a groundless surmise.

But it is yet further objected, that indulgence desired hath an inconsistency with *publick peace* and tranquillity, the other head of the general accusation before mentioned. Many fears and suspicions are mustered up, to contribute assistance unto this objection also. For we are in the field of surmises, which is endless, and boundless. Unto such as make use of *these pretences* we can surely say, that might we by any means be convinced of the truth of this suggestion, we should not only desist from our present supplications, but speedily renounce those very principles which necessitate the return. For we assuredly know, that no divine truth, nothing really relating unto the worship of God, can cause or occasion any civil disturbances unless they arise from corrupt affections in them that profess it, or in them that oppose it. And as we strive to free our selves from them on the one hand, so it is our desire and prayer, that others may do so also on the other, which will give sufficient assurance to tranquillity. But we are more over wholly freed from any concernment in this objection, in that, He who is undoubtedly the best and most competent judge of what will contribute to the peace of the Kingdom, and who is inconsistent therewith, and who is incomparably most concerned in the one or the

other even the *Kings Majesty* himself, hath frequently declared his *royal intentions* for the granting of indulgence desired who would never have been induced thereunto, had he not perfectly understood its consistency with the peace and welfare of the Kingdom. And as our confidence in those *Royal Declarations* hath not hitherto been weakened by the interveniency of so many occasions as have cast us under another condition, so we hope that our peaceable deportment hath in some measure contributed in the thoughts of prudent men, unto the facilitating of their accomplishment. And as this will be to the lasting renown of his Majesty, so it will appear to be the most suitable unto the *present State of things* in this Nation both with respect unto it self and the Nations that are round about us. And we think it our duty to pray, that his Majesty may *acquire those glories* in his Reign, which none of his subjects may have cause to mourn for, and such will be the effect of clemency and righteousness.

We find it indeed still pretended that the *allowance of meeting* for the worship of God, how ever ordered and bounded, will be a means to procure and further sedition in the Common wealth, and to advantage men in the pursuit of designs to the disturbance of the Kingdom. But it were equal that it should be proved, that those who desire this *indulgence* have such inclinations and designs, before such pretences be admitted as of any force. For our parts, we expect *no liberty*, but from his Majesties favour and Authority, with the concurrence of the Parliament, which when we have obtained, (as at no time, what ever our condition be, have we the least thoughts or inclinations into any sedition or publick disturbance) so having an obligation upon us in the things of our greatest interest in this world, we know not from what sort or party of men, more cordial adherence unto and defence of publick peace and tranquillity, can justly be expected. For where there are *more causes* and reasons of compliance, and acquiescency, then there are in the contrary, it is rationally to be supposed, that they will prevail. And to surmise the acting of *Multitudes* contrary, to their own *Interests*, and acknowledged obligation of favour, is to take away all assurance out of humane affairs.

Neither

Neither is there any colour of sound reason in what is pretended, of the advantage that any may have to promote seditious designs by the meetings of the dissenters pleaded for in the worship of God. For doubtless the publick peace will never be hazarded by such designs, whilst they are managed by none, but such as think to promote and carry them on, in assemblies of promiscuous multitudes, of Men Women and Children; unknown too for the most part unto themselves, and to one another. But these things are spoken because they have been wonted so to be, other considerations to confirm them are none. Conscience, Interest, sense of obligations, the only safe rules amongst men to judge by of future events, all plead an expectation of the highest tranquillity in the mindes and spirits of men, upon the indulgence desired.

And there lyes a ready security, against the pretended fears of the contrivance of sedition in assemblies of Men, Women, and Children and strangers to one another in a great measure by commanding all *Meetings* to be disposed in such away, as that they may be exposed to all, and be under the constant inspection of Authority.

As for other courses of *Severity* with respect to the peace & prosperity of the Kingdome, it may not be amiss a little to consider *who*, & what are the dissenters from the present establishment. For the Persons themselves, they are mostly of that sort and condition of men in the Common-wealth, upon whose industry and endeavours in their severall wayes and callings, the trade and wealth of the Nation doth much depend. And what advantage it will be to the Kingdome to break in upon them unto their discouragement, fear or ruine we suppose no man can divine. Those who think there are enough for the work without them, and that there exclusion will make Room for others, doth gratifie indeed thereby some particular persons, intent upon their own private advantages, which they would willingly advance in the ruine of their neighbours; but scarce seem to have taken a right measure of the state of the whole. For whereas it may be *sometimes*, there may in *some places* be too many of them who manage the affairs of trade and commerce, when their concerns are drawn unto a head, and a readines for their last exchange than there should be so of those that do dispose and prepare things also.

also, to bring them unto that condition, is impossible. It cannot then be, but that the continuance of so great fears and discouragements upon men, as those which their dissent from the established way of worship doth at present cast upon them, must of necessity weaken the Nation, in that part of it wherein its principle strength doth ly. Neither are they a few only who will be found to be concerned in this matter, which is not to be dispised. *Pliny*, a wise counsellour writing to *Tragian* a wise and renowned Emperour, about *Christians* who where then the objects of the publick hatred of the world, desires his advice upon the account of their Numbers, not that they were to be feared but unmeet to be punished: unless he intended to lay the Empire waste.

Visa enim est mihi res digne consultatione, maxime propter periculis tantum numerum; multi enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis utriusque sexus, etiam vocantur in periculum & vocabantur; neque enim Civitates tantum, sed viros omnes atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervulgata est.

So then they turned Christian Religion, for the multitude would still keep the name of truth and Religion to themselves; that oppressed, the lesser number, must bear the name or title, which they consent or conspire to cast upon them. But the thing it self, as to the persons at present dissenting from the established form, is not unduly exprest. And as it will be an act of Royall Clemency, and like to the work of God himself to free at once so great multitudes of all ages, sexes, and conditions from the fears and dangers of those evils, which they are fully satisfied they do not deserve; so any other way of quitting the Governours, and Government of this Nation, from those uneasy thoughts, which an apprehension of such an effect of their Rule upon multitudes of subjects must needs produce, will be very difficult, if not impossible; shall the course begun in severity against them, be pursued & what generous spirit employed in the execution of it, can but be weary at last with undoing and ruining families, of those persons, whom they find to live peaceably in subjection to the Government of the Nation and usefully amongst their Neighbours, merely because they dare not sin against God, in transgressing against that perditional conscience

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ing his will and worship, which he hath given unto them : for they cannot but at last consider, that no man erreth willingly, or believes any thing against his light, or hath other thoughts of God and his worship, they what he apprehends to be from himself, or that any duty is accepted of God, which springs from compulsion. How much more Noble and Honourable will they discern the work of relieving men sober and peaceable in distress, to be, than to have the complaints and tears, and ruine of Innocent men and their families, continually reflecting themselves on their mindes. Nor is there any probability of success in this procedure, for as Time hath alwayes made for Rule, and encouragements which are solely in the power of Rulers, have effected great compliance even in things religious, so force and violent prosecution in such cases have been alwaies fruitless. For it is known how much they are disadvantaged as to success, in that the righteousness and equity of their pretended causes are alwayes *dubious* to unconcerned persons which makes them think that the true reason of them, is other then what is pretended, when they see men whom they apprehend as innocent and guiltless as themselves, as to all the concernments of mankind in this world, pursued with penalties equal unto those that are notoriously *Criminal*, they are greatly inclined unto commiseration towards them : especially if at the interposition of the name and worship of God in the cause, they judge for ought appears to them they fear God and endeavour to please him, at least as well as those by whom they are molested.

And when they further understand, that those whom they see to suffer such things as they account grievous, and are really ruinous to them and their families, do it for their conscience sake, it strongly induceth them to believe that it must needs be something good and honest that men choose so to suffer for them, rather then to forgoe. For all suffering for Religion, they know to be in the power and will of *them that suffer*, and not of those that *inflict penalties* upon them : for their Religion is their choice, which they may part withal, if they esteem it not worth the hazard wherewith it is attended.

Thus the *Roman Historian* tells us, in the first sufferings of the Christians at Rome. *Quamquam adversus fontes, & Nervissima exempla*

empla meritos (for so he thought) *Miseratio* *Oriebatur*, *tanquam non*
utilitate publica, sed in sevitiam aliquorum absumerentur.

Nor is it a probable way of dealing with the consciences of men, especially of *Multitudes* who are able to give mutual testimony; and encouragement to one another, Yea in such a state of things, dangers of times delight men, and they find a satisfaction, if not an honour in their miseries; as having sufficient assurance, that it is a glorious and a blessed thing to suffer things hard and dreadful in the world, when they are conscious to themselves of no guilt or evil, and therefore as *severity* hath hitherto got no ground on the mindes of men in this matter, no more is it like to do for the future. And if it be proceeded in, it cannot be avoided but that it must be perpetuated from one generation to another, and a sad experiment be made, who will first be wearied, those that inflict penalties, or those that undergoe them. And what in the mean time will become of the composure of the spirits of men, the mutual trust, confidence and assurance between all sorts of persons, which is the abiding foundation of publick peace and prosperity.

Also what advantages have been made by some neighbour Nations, what at present they further hope for, from that great anxiety which the minds of men are cast into, meerly and solely on the account of what they feel or fear, from their discent unto the publick worship, which to themselves is utterly unavoidable, is known to all.

But we have done! and what are we that we should complain of any whom God is pleased to stir up and use for our exercise and trial? We desire in patience and silence, to bear his indignation against whom we have sinned and for what concerns those wayes and truths of his, for whose profession we may yet suffer in this world, to approve our consciences unto him, and to leave the event of all unto him, *who will one day judge the world in righteousness.* We know that we are poor sinful wormes of the earth, in our selves meet for nothing but to be trodden down under the foot of men; but his wayes and the purity of his worship are *dear* unto him, which he will preserve and vindicate from all opposition. In the mean time as it is our duty to live peaceably with all men in a conscientious

scientific subjection unto that Authority which he hath set over us, we shall endeavour so to behave our selves, in the pursuit and observance of it, as that *whereat we may be evil spoken of, as evil doers, Men may be ashamed, beholding our good Conversation in Christ, and give Glory to God in the day of Visitation.*

Whatever is ours, whatever is in our Power, whatever God hath intrusted us with the disposal of, we willing'y resign and give up to the Will and Commands of our *Superiours*; but as to our Minds and Consciences in the things of his Woiship and Service, he hath reserved the Sovereignty of them unto himself, to him must we give an account of them at the great Day; nor can we forgo the care of preserving them intire for him, and loyal unto him, without a renunciation of all hopes of acceptance with him; and so render our selves of all men the most miserable. May we be suffered herein to be faithful unto him, and the everlasting Concernments of our own Souls, we shall always labour to manifest, that there is no way or means of Peace and Reconciliation among those who professing Faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, yet differ in their Apprehensions about sundry things so ne way or other belonging thereunto, that is appoined by him, and may expect a Blessing from him, but we will readily embrace, and according as we are called, improve to the utmost.

And if herein also our Endeavours meet with nothing but Contempt and Reproach, yet none can hinder us but that we may pour out our Souls unto God, for the accomplishment of his blessed and glorious Promises concerning that Truth, Peace, & Liberty, which he will give unto his Church in his appointed time. For we know, *That when He shall rise up to the Prey, & devour the whole earth with the fire of his Zealouse, He will turn to the people pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent, that the Earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea, his glory shall be revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together, and then shall all his people receive from him one heart, and one way, that they may fear him for ever, for the good of them and their children after them, by virtue of the everlasting Covenant.* And for our own parts, whatever our Outward Condition be, we know he will perfect that which concerns us, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands, because his Mercy endureth for ever. FINIS.